

Dec 16th 8th Principle Learning Community Report

I attended the UUA 8th Principle Learning Community meeting. At the dec 16th meeting several minister's shared stories from their congregation regarding steps they took to adopt the 8th principle and how they began to examine their congregation with an 8th principle lens.

- Rev Robin Tanner reported that Summit Beacon UU began having conversations regarding adopting the 8th principle in the fall of 2019. They began the process by having their leadership educating themselves. Once they had a core group that understood the 8th principle they began to spread the news to the congregation. They had 2 Sunday services on the 8th Principle and floated an idea for a vote at their annual meeting. They voted and approved the 8th principle in June 2020.

The main concern the congregation had was the potential of disrupting the denomination's process of the 8th principle. She feels that 25% of the congregation is engaged in educating themselves and actively working on the 8th principle. One thing that happened after the 8th principle was adopted was the rewriting the congregational covenant. The covenant committee decided to incorporate the 8th principle into the fabric of their covenant. They engaged BIPOC and other marginalized groups within their congregation in the process. This process involved re-examining internal behaviors of their church. They are also continuing their education by engaging with the Racial Equity Institute.

- Rev. T. J. FitzGerald reported that when he became the minister at the Honolulu UU congregation, they had recently adopted the 8th principle. His work began with incorporating the 8th principle into the way people think and act. He worked with the congregation to examine each aspect of congregational life through the lens of the 8th principle. They posted the 8th principle on the wall so that visitors could see their commitment. He talked about how people under 30 find it easy to understand the core of the 8th principle. He felt as if the 8th principle attracts people under 30. They also held workshops on microaggressions, formed an ADORE group (A Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity) , ADORE book group, and a social justice council.
- Rev McKinley Sims of the Philadelphia UU Church of Restoration was the first congregation to adopt the 8th principle. He talked about how he worked to incorporate the 8th principle into the worship service. He examined the usual hymns, musical performances, videos, readings and stories included in their services. He decided to intentional incorporate representation of diversity of people into the services. He included at least one component of the worship service from a person of color (readings, music, videos, story, etc.). Sometimes this meant having videos or speakers from outside of the congregation present a reading or perform the music or sing the hymn.

The ministers also had a group discussion about how with the 8th principle, UUs are at the forefront of cultural change. UUs have the potential of being the religion of the future.

They also discussed the "whiteness" of the UU religion. As part of understanding the 8th principle, there is a need to examine the history of UUs and Christianity. There is a history of white supremacy, capitalism and chattel slavery tied up with UU history which needs to

be examined. UU's need to visit reconciliation and things that we take for granted. They mentioned the book "Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism " as a way to start making these connections. One way to reconciling the relationship to Christian religions is exploring earth based religious principles.